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Follow-up to the outcome of the twenty-sixth special session: implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS

Letter dated 11 November 2002 from the Chairmen of the Second and Third Committees addressed to the President of the General Assembly

We have the honour of writing to inform you that the Second and Third Committees held a joint meeting to hear a briefing on HIV/AIDS by Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), on 25 October 2002.

In this connection, the Second and Third Committees would be grateful if you would bring to the attention of the General Assembly the summary of the proceedings of the above-mentioned briefing and circulate it as a document of the General Assembly (see annex).

(*Signed*) Marco Antonio **Suazo**
Chairman
Second Committee

(*Signed*) Christian **Wenaweser**
Chairman
Third Committee

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Annex

Summary of proceedings of the joint meeting of the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, held on 25 October 2002

A briefing by Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), was jointly convened by the chairmen of the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly in preparation for the consideration of General Assembly agenda item 42, which would take place on 8 November 2002 in plenary session. At that briefing, participants included government representatives of the two Committees, as well as non-governmental organizations with representative status on the Programme Coordination Board of UNAIDS.

Following opening remarks underscoring the macroeconomic impact of the epidemic traditionally viewed as simply a social and health concern, Dr. Piot updated delegations on the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, the status of the HIV/AIDS epidemic worldwide and his views on the way forward in the global response to the epidemic. In so doing, the following was highlighted:

(a) The Declaration of Commitment is the overarching implementation framework for the fight against HIV/AIDS and, as such, represents a key tool for advocacy and assessment of progress;

(b) The responses by Member States to the UNAIDS-administered questionnaire indicate achievements in the key areas of leadership, partnership and resource mobilization. In this regard, national strategies have increasingly been adopted; regional cooperation and commitment promoted; civil society and the business community are increasingly cooperating with national authorities; and there has been a doubling of funds available to the fight against AIDS in low and middle-income countries, although it was concluded that $10.5 billion is still needed annually;

(c) Remaining challenges include the lack of comprehensiveness of most national programmes, the presence of stigma and discrimination and insufficient resources;

(d) In the future, greater focus should be on prevention programmes targeting young people, action to address stigma and discrimination, improved access to care and treatment, the development of safe and effective preventive measures, such as microbicides and new, additional and sustained resources.

In terms of the recently completed five-year external evaluation of UNAIDS, which commended the Programme for its advocacy, work on policy and best practice and partnership-building, it was pointed out that the global response to the AIDS epidemic has shifted from advocacy to implementation. To this end, greater attention would be placed on meeting new global needs and boosting effectiveness at the country level.

In their comments, participants mentioned the key role of civil society in the global fight; the importance of prevention with care and treatment remaining the focus of the fight; the role of UNAIDS in follow-up to the United Nations

Millennium Declaration; the development of guidelines on HIV/AIDS and human rights; the relationship between UNAIDS and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; improving access to treatment and care; establishing programmes to protect orphans; promoting microbicide research; formulating indicators to assess the social and economic impact of the disease; UNAIDS support for traditional medicine; the vulnerability of women and their access to treatment; the continued stigma and marginalization from policy-making of persons living with HIV; and the need for a more thoughtful dialogue on reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS resulting from injecting drug use. The importance of a one-day plenary session of the General Assembly to review further progress was underscored.